

"Artie is the real hero!"

There was a family who were out visiting the zoo one day and having a great day, when all of a sudden the lion's cage opened up. Well everyone started screaming and shouting and running for their lives except for this one old lady who just stood there right in the lion's path as calmly as you like.

A few hours later they managed to trap the lion and put him back in his cage and the manager of the zoo met the woman who just stood there while everyone else was panicking and he asked her, 'why she didn't run away from the lion?' And she said, 'oh I wasn't worried because I knew it was a man eating lion.'

Let me share with you a few words from the Bible, **Psalms 118:8** says, "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man." What does that mean? Well to put it simply it means if you trust people more than you trust God you're not going to get help when you need it most.

I want to share a story with you today about a man who trusted God far more than he trusted people. Because many times when you always do what is good and right it's going to make others look bad.

Our story is set in a place called **Babylon** and there is a new king in town and his name is **Darius**. Now **King Darius** decided he needed some help to rule over his kingdom and so he appointed **120** other people to help him. But he also decided that the **120** people needed someone to be their boss so he employed a man named **Daniel** and two others to be their boss.

You see the King was so impressed with **Daniel** that he put him in charge of the whole kingdom because he worked harder, and did much better work than any one else. But there was a problem; some people didn't like that idea because they were jealous of Daniel having all that power.

Daniel 6:4 says, "We have to do something about this Daniel," the supervisors, the governors, the lieutenant governors, and all the other officials said to themselves. But no matter how hard they looked, they couldn't find anything wrong with Daniel because Daniel was completely faithful and honest in everything he did."

Now I think you guys can understand that, when you're with your so-called friends who know you're a nice person but they are always looking for something to blame you for. And usually they end up telling lies to get you in trouble, they tell you're other friends that you said something bad about someone else and you end up saying that's not true and you know it's not true because you're an honest person. But if there is one thing your so-called friends will really have a go at you for, it's because you go to church every week.

You see that's what these people did with **Daniel**, even though they knew he was faithful and honest in everything he did, they said to themselves, "Maybe we can use his religion against him." And so they came up with a devious plan.

In **Daniel 6:6-9** that exactly what they did, "They came before King Darius one day and said, "King Darius! May you live forever!" (Although each one of them was probably really thinking, 'May you die tomorrow - so I can become King!').

"All of us, who help to rule your kingdom; the supervisors, the governors, the lieutenant governors, and all the other officials, think that it would be very wise of you to issue a command that for thirty days no one should be able to ask for anything from any god or man except you, O Great and Mighty King. And if anyone should ask for anything from any god or man besides you, they should be thrown into the lions' den."

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These people went to all lengths to get something bad against **Daniel**, and when **King Darius** accepted the idea he signed the new law. It became a law that could not be changed, but Daniel trusted and wanted to please God more than he did people.

And according to **Daniel 6:10**, "Daniel heard the King's decree, but still, the next morning he went to his window to pray, just as he did every morning, noon and night."

You see guys when people ask you to do something which you know is wrong, you still have to have the courage to do what is right. **Daniel** always prayed to God and nothing and no-one not even a law from the king was going to stop him from praying to God.

Now I understand that it's not always easy to say something nice about a person when everybody else is always saying something bad about them. But if you know that people are telling lies about someone, you should have the courage to stand up and say, 'that's not true.'

Now when you do that some people won't like you for saying that, because you're making them look bad. And when you make them look bad, they will use that against you, to gossip more lies about you and get you into more trouble. And when all these people saw **Daniel** praying, they couldn't wait to tell the king to get him into trouble.

In **Daniel 6:12-14** "Your Majesty, may you live forever!" they said. "Didn't you sign a law that said for thirty days no one should ask for anything from any god or man except you, O Great and Mighty King? And if anyone should ask for anything from any god or man besides you, they should be thrown into the lions' den?" "Yes," said the king. "It is a law that cannot be changed." Then they all said, "We saw Daniel praying to his God this very morning! He does not respect you or your order. When King Darius heard this news he was very sad. He knew that Daniel was a good and honest man, who served him faithfully. And so he worked into the night, trying to find some way to rescue Daniel. But he couldn't."

They tricked the king into making a law; they waited for **Daniel** to break it, and told the king about **Daniel** breaking the law. And just in case the king wanted to change his mind about this law, they all went back to **Darius** and said in **Daniel 6:15** "Your Majesty, you know a law can never be changed. Daniel must be thrown into the lions' den!"

They finally got what they wanted all along, and that is something we all need to be careful of. You guys do it sometimes, adults did it when they were younger and sadly some adults still do it today. I'm talking about trying to get people into trouble.

Why you do you tell your mum or dad about your brothers and sisters when they do something wrong? Is it really because you care about them or it is because you want to get them into trouble? When your at school and your friends upset you, do you tell the teacher because you want to see them getting into trouble?

Galatians 6:7 "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." Do you like people telling lies about you? Do you like getting people into trouble? You see if you do and say things to deliberately get people into trouble, then God says, you can be sure that people will do the same to you.

Now although **Darius** was the king, changing his mind would make him look silly, so he had no choice but to have **Daniel** thrown into the lions' den. But just before he did he said to **Daniel** in **Daniel 6:16**, "May the God whom you serve so faithfully save you!" The king's men grabbed Daniel and threw him into a pit filled with pacing, roaring, hot-breathed lions.

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They rolled a stone over the mouth of the den, and the King sealed it with his royal seal, so that no one could move the stone and rescue Daniel. That night, the king could not sleep at all and first thing the next morning, just as the sun was beginning to rise, the king ran to the lion's den and shouted out, according to **Daniel 6:20**, "Daniel! Servant of the living God! Was the God you serve so faithfully able to save you from the lions' jaws?"

And of course Daniel couldn't answer because he was in a den with loads of hungry lions all night **wasn't he?** He's probably been eaten alive and the lions would be sleeping because they have just had a big meal.

But no! There was a voice from inside the den and the king said, "Daniel? I can't believe this, are you really still alive?" And Daniel said to him in **Daniel 6:21** "May your majesty live forever!" Daniel called from inside the lions' den. "God sent his angel to shut the lion's mouths all through the night. God has saved me so that you will know that I am innocent, and I have served you faithfully!"

Daniel was alive and the king was so happy. He was so happy that he ordered his servants to pull **Daniel** from the lions' den. Everyone saw that **Daniel** had trusted God, and God had saved him.

Now you might be thinking, wait a minute, these lions were probably just circus lions, which looked fierce and roared like lions but maybe they never had any teeth. Maybe they were tamed lions who had their claws clipped once a week by a vet, that's why **Daniel** didn't even have a scratch on him.

Well look at what happened next in **Daniel 6:24** "Then the king sent for all the people who had accused Daniel. They were in trouble now! Right then and there, the king had them arrested and thrown into lions' den themselves. The lions were not so friendly this time."

What goes around comes around, the very people who tricked the king into making a law, the very people who looked for any excuse to get **Daniel** into trouble, the very people who were happy to see **Daniel** get into trouble and being punished. Those very same people ended up in the lion's den and within minutes they were eaten alive. **Daniel** was faithful because he did what was right.

And one of the reasons I wanted to share that story with you is simply to show you that God was and still is able today to do great and wonderful things. Yes your friends may laugh at you because you go to **KBC** but who is going to laugh last.

Daniel was a man of honesty and he refused to follow the crowd that would force him to disobey God. He was saved and **look what happened to them?** **Matthew 10:28** says "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Jesus is telling us all that we should honour God above everything else. And when we trust and obey God, like **Daniel** did he will protect us. Now you might be thinking well that's OK for **Daniel** because God sent an angel to protect him.

But what about when I'm in the lion's den and people are telling lies about me because they want to get me into trouble. What about when people find out I go to KBC and all they want to do is make fun of me? Where is God then?

Now we may not be able to see God physically, but He is there. In fact He lets us know that He is here every second of the day.

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For example God keeps the sun shining and keeps the earth at just the right distance from the sun. If the earth were any closer to the sun it would be much too hot for us to survive, any further away and it would be much too cold for us. God's laws and power keep the universe in place.

Now I want each of you to take your cotton ball and hold it high above your heads. On the count of three, let go of your cotton ball: one, two three! **How many of your cotton balls continued to stay high above your heads? How many of the cotton balls fell? Why did the cotton balls fall?** That's right; all of the cotton balls fell because of gravity.

But **Who made gravity? Can you see gravity? Why is gravity useful to us? Can you imagine what are lives would be like without gravity;** we would float off into space! Now pick up your cotton ball and place it on the palm of your hand. Softly blow on your cotton ball until it moves.

Did you touch it? What caused the cotton ball to move? That's right your breath or wind caused the cotton ball to move. **Who makes it possible for the wind to blow? Can you see the wind? How is wind useful to us?** Without wind the clouds would not move, without clouds we would not have rain, without rain we would not have water.

These were just two examples of God's invisible interaction in our life. When we pray and look to God, He will help us in ways we may not be able to see, but the help comes from God nonetheless. So we should all be thankful that God helps us every day.

When the King of Far, Far Away 'croaks it', it is up to Shrek, Donkey and Puss in Boots go off to bring back the next heir to the throne, Artie. Whilst Shrek and his crew are gone, Prince Charming brings together all evil fairy tale creatures in an attempt to take over as the new king.

And near the end of the film just as Charming is about to kill Shrek, Fiona and her friends, along with Puss, Donkey and the Fairy Tale characters, leap onto the stage to confront the villains. But just as the villains outnumber the heroes and take them prisoner again. In the nick of time, Artie arrives and convinces the villains to stop and turn over a new leaf, proving himself to possess effective leadership skills.

And he says some words of wisdom, "Just because some people treat you like a loser, it doesn't mean you are one. The thing that matters most is what you think of yourself. If there is something you really want or someone you really want to be then you are standing in your own way."

And that is so true isn't it; **Artie** is the real hero in the film. And what God is saying to you all today is that just because people think you're weird because you believe in God or go to **KBC** doesn't mean that you are weird.

In fact they are the ones that are weird because **how can they not believe in God?** Because at the end of the day all that really does matter is what you think about yourself and what God thinks of you.

And if you really enjoy **KBC** then don't be ashamed to talk about it around your friends, it's them that is missing out. And if you really want to believe in God and you really want to be like your mum, dad, grandmother or grandfather and become a Christian when you're older then the only person that is stopping that from happening is you.

Because people will have a go at you won't go away, even if you don't decide to become Christians. They will say things like, **look there's the posh kid who lives in a big house.**

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There's that kid **who thinks she's better looking than anyone else.** There's that brainy kid **who thinks he is cleverer than anyone else.**

But guys be brave and don't be frightened to stand up and say and do what is right. Tell your friends that you don't want to play football on Sunday mornings because you would rather go to church. Tell your friends about what happens in **KBC** and tell them about Jesus.

Have the courage to say **"no"** when someone offers you alcohol or drugs. Have the courage to stand up and say **I don't want to do that because I know it's wrong.** You see many times, it may be difficult or scary to do the right thing. But when you're scared just look at the sun in the sky and remember.

When you're scared just feel the wind gently blowing against your face and remember. Remember that God is with you, and you do not have to be scared. The apostle Paul asked himself that very same question when he was afraid of what people were doing and saying against him in **Romans 8:31**, he asks, **"If God is for us, who can be against us?"**

He understood that with God's help, we can accomplish many things we could never do on our own. God changes the impossible into the possible. And just like God closed the lion's mouths, He will close the mouths of everyone who stops us from trying to be ourselves and please God.